

# The Effects of Israeli Unilateralism on Palestinian Violence

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation  
*with research distinction* in Political Science in the undergraduate  
colleges of The Ohio State University

by

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June 2007

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## **Part One: Introduction**

In September 2005, the State of Israel completed a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Israel, which had acquired the Gaza Strip (as well as the Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, and Golan Heights) as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War, changed its policy with regard to the Palestinians and acted on its own, without consultation with the Palestinians. The unilateral disengagement involved withdrawing all of Israel's civilian population from the Gaza Strip as well as all Israeli military presence. Israel closed off the Gaza Strip and its 1,482,405 Palestinian residents (CIA World Factbook). The plan was initially anticipated to be the basis for a final unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank, and imposed a final set of terms resulting in establishing a Palestinian state. The Israelis intended to dictate the terms of the final status agreement without any negotiations with the Palestinians, this was known as Ehud Olmert's "convergence plan." However, due to unforeseen events, this plan would be abandoned. Regardless, the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip was accomplished and represents a unique case of unilateral action by the Israelis in the Middle East peace process.

After the first Palestinian intifada (uprising), which started in 1987, the Arab States realized that they could no longer represent the Palestinian people. The beginning of a formal relationship between the Israelis and the Palestinians occurred at the Madrid Peace Conference, on October 30, 1991, when for the first time the Israelis sat down at the same table with the Palestinians, along with the Syrians, Lebanese, and Jordanians, with the United States serving as a mediator. This conference would eventually lead to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. This started the era of multilateral negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians when they were able to consistently meet and

work on a “final status agreement” between Israel and a future Palestinian state (Friedman xiv-xv).

Following the collapse of the peace process at the end of 2000 and beginning of 2001, the Israelis and the Palestinians entered into a new type of relationship. This was a “hybrid” policy, because there were no actual negotiations, but there were attempts at a peace process along with Israeli unilateral actions. This period included the second intifada and Israel’s building of the separation barrier between Israel and the Palestinians in and around the West Bank. Israel altered its policy on April 14, 2004, when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced his intention to President Bush that Israel would withdraw unilaterally from the Gaza Strip (Jewish Virtual Library). This represented a major change in Israeli policy and for the first time would result in serious actions towards the creation of a Palestinian state without negotiations with the Palestinians.

The Gaza withdrawal actually met certain requirements of previously proposed solution to the conflict. All Israeli settlers and soldiers were removed from a territory designated in every seen agreement to become part of the Palestinian state. Negotiations had absolutely no impact on this action in the slightest. Immediately it must be asked what have been the effects of such a dramatic change in policy, the unilateral withdrawal, on the relationship between the Israelis and the Palestinians and on the future of the peace process.

The unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip was a unique action because nothing similar to it had been done in this conflict. The shift in policy to unilateral action would therefore have consequences that were unknown when the plan was enacted. This thesis seeks to discover how this change in strategy to unilateralism affected the region.

Was the action beneficial, detrimental, or has it had no effect on the Palestinian- Israeli conflict?

In this context the conflict is referring to violence and the willingness to participate in violence. Since the disengagement was accomplished by the Israelis it is therefore important to see what impact the policy change has had on the Palestinians. David Makovsky, director of the Project on Middle East Peace Process at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, says “Gaza disengagement will be the prism through which to view future peacemaking.” (Makovsky- Gaza Pullout) His statement rings true that this complete change in strategy will serve as an important benchmark to which future actions could and would be compared. If the unilateral actions had a positive impact on the Palestinians towards the creation of peace and stability, then it could provide an answer to the conflict. However, the effects of this shift in policy must first be fully examined.

Close to two years after the withdrawal, it is impossible to know exactly how the Israeli unilateral disengagement will ultimately affect the relationship between the Israelis and the Palestinians. However, we are able to analyze the immediate impact the policy shift had on the Palestinian people in the short run. The first and most obvious way to measure this impact is by seeing whether and how the policy change impacted Palestinian violence towards Israelis. This is the key variable to be examined, because the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was in part designed to reduce violence towards Israelis. It is now possible to study the immediate impact on Palestinian violence towards Israelis. It is also possible to examine how Palestinian use of and support for violence against Israel has changed throughout the years and different types of Israeli policy. This is

important in showing whether the violence is due to a shift in the thinking of the Palestinian people and also if it is connected to the current Israeli policy..

### **Roadmap:**

The second part of this thesis will focus on why the question regarding the unilateral disengagement's effects on Palestinian violence is important. It will look at why the Gaza withdrawal and its effects will impact the future relations between the Palestinians and Israelis. This section will also examine the past relations between the Palestinians and the Israelis and show why the shift to unilateralism was significant. This part will also incorporate a detailed explanation of the way the research was conducted. The third part of this paper will present the evidence, in which the dependent variables measured are Palestinian violence and the inclination of violence against Israel. The independent variable being examined as the explanation of violence is the policy change by Israel to the unilateral withdrawal. This is done through examining both Palestinian public opinion polling collected between 1994 and 2006 and with a count of violent attacks against Israel during the "hybrid" policy years and the years during the shift to and implantation of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, from 2003- 2006. The fourth and final part will draw conclusions by combining the public opinion polling with the violence count. This part will also include policy recommendations on the future of the Palestinian- Israeli negotiations.

### **Part 2: Relations between the Israelis and Palestinians on a continuum**

In the history of the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians it has been very hard to determine who, if anyone, is in control of the situation. Before 1993, there

was no official recognition by either Israel or the Palestinians of the other side's right to exist as a state. Starting with the signing of the "The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements" (Oslo 1), the Israelis and the Palestinians were able to start an actual relationship, which included dialogue (Bickerton and Klausner 264-266). It is hard to define completely what the actual relationship was between the two sides. For example whether one side was coercing the other more so than the other or even whether only one country was completely dictating the terms. Rather, the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians can be assessed on a continuum that contains all of the possible relationships. On one extreme end of this continuum is when both countries are mutually negotiating and have equal say and impact. At the other end would be when one side, in this case Israel, has complete control over the situation, and forces the Palestinians into whatever outcome they choose. Included in this continuum is when one country tries to coerce the other into doing something for them. It is in this continuum that the different multilateral negotiations and unilateralism fit into context, each closer to the separate ends.

The concept of the Israeli unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip (also known as a pullout or withdrawal) refers to a plan by Ariel Sharon that included the evacuation from the Gaza Strip of all Israeli military and civilian personnel, including all Israeli civilian settlers who lived in the Gaza Strip and the dismantling of every Israeli military base inside the Strip. The Gaza withdrawal was designed and accomplished by the Israeli Government with no help from or coordination with the Palestinian people. Therefore, this is considered to be a unilateral withdrawal. For the purposes of this paper, unilateralism will be defined as any action that is accomplished by one party acting on its

own terms without negotiations or contact with the other party. Multilateralism is when there are negotiations and agreements between the two parties done in an environment that allows for equal input. This will be referred to as multilateralism and not bilateralism, because there are often other parties involved in the negotiations and contact, typically the United States or another international party. Mediated unilateral action may also involve a third party. For example, to some extent the Gaza Withdrawal was mediated, because the United States supported the disengagement financially and at the same time it was thought to have been a part of the “Roadmap” to peace (a plan designed by the U.S., Russia, European Union, and the United Nations, that will be discussed later) (Performance-based Roadmap). However, because the Palestinians were not involved in the slightest in the Gaza withdrawal and it was done by the Israelis on their own terms, it is considered here to be a fully unilateral action. Therefore, In the 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip Israel was forcing their own terms on the Palestinians, by dictating the provisions of the withdrawal.

**The problems that prevent any solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict:**

The Palestinians and Israel face several issues important to creating a lasting peace process between the two nations. The failure to reach a consensus agreement on any of these important issues led to the current withdrawal from Gaza. The most important part of a final status agreement is for both countries to acknowledge and recognize the right for the other party to exist as a separate nation state in its own territory with defined and secure borders. There are four major areas of dispute that must be resolved in order to create a permanent and final agreement. The first major problem to solve in any agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians is the establishment of

agreed upon borders between the two countries and what relationship these borders would have to the 1949 armistice lines. Included in this problem is also how to connect the West Bank and Gaza Strip into one country, while keeping both Israel and a future Palestinian state contiguous.

The second major problem, the Israeli Settlements, is automatically connected to the problem of borders. There are currently over 250,000 settlers in the West Bank, and all of these people want to be included in land that will be annexed into the state of Israel.

The third major problem are the Palestinian refugees who either left or were forced out of Israel during the 1948 war and now inhabit either the current Palestinian territories or other countries. The Israelis are unwilling to accept any agreement that results in the allowance of these refugees to move to Israel, because it would endanger Israel being a Jewish state. This problem, also known as the right of return, is considered by some Middle East experts as the most complicated issue and is one of the hardest to solve.

The fourth and last major area of dispute is the status of Jerusalem, the claimed capital of both peoples. This is also considered by many experts to be the hardest issue to solve, because of its unique complexity. Jerusalem has already been annexed by Israel. Any agreement involving returning annexed lands requires a vote of the Israeli public, which makes this even more complicated. Also included is the issue of the status of the Old City and the Temple Mount, also known to Muslims as Haram esh sheriff, and how sovereignty over each religion's holy sites would be divided.

These four major areas of dispute are actually the most basic parts of any future agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, but they are also the most complex



and hardest to solve. All of these issues must be solved for any agreement to result in a successful and lasting final status. (Pressman, Enderlin, Rabinovich)

### **History of negotiations:**

Starting in 1993, with the signing of Oslo 1, the Palestinians and the Israelis reached the most basic principle needed to begin the process of negotiations by recognizing each other and formally opening the channels for negotiations. This was the start of the formal “peace process” in which the Palestinians and the Israelis were able to come to multiple agreements through negotiations. This process included equal status negotiations, even though other countries would help broker these agreements, (primarily the United States). The process started out with the hope that there could be pure multilateral negotiations that would ultimately result in a lasting and final peace agreement.

Immediately after Oslo 1 was signed, numerous other agreements were reached through negotiations involving the Israelis and the Palestinians. These were “the Protocol on Economic Relation”, “The Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area”, “Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities between Israel and the PLO” and the “The Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip” (Oslo 2). These agreements all served as the initial steps in the Oslo peace process, and began transferring control of Palestinian Territories from the Israelis to the Palestinians, starting with Gaza and Jericho. The Oslo agreements established a five year timeframe that would lead to the declaration of a permanent Palestinian State in May, 1999. Even though 1994 would be an important year, there were also several Palestinian extremist terrorist attacks, including four deadly suicide bombings in Israel (Bickerton and

Klausener 281-283). Despite these bombings, the peace process still continued amid demonstrations opposing it by extremists on both sides. It was hoped that the peace process would reach a final status agreement through multilateral negotiations.

Following the assassination of the architect of the peace process, Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and the election of Benjamin Netanyahu of the right wing Likud party, the peace process began to stutter and deteriorate. For the first time in the history of the negotiations there would not be such open and willing negotiations from either side. This foreshadowed the time period after the final collapse of the peace process through the opening of the Hasmonean Tunnel under the Western Wall of the Temple Mount along both the Jewish and Arab quarters. The Arabs were both surprised by the excavation, because it had been done in secret, and appalled because the Israel had dug underneath Muslim holy sites. Immediately, Arafat called for marches and protests against such a “big crime.” As a result of the marches, 15 Israeli soldiers and 60 Palestinians were killed. The Israeli public lost their faith in the ability of the Palestinian Authority to try to achieve peace. Both sides had taken a step in the wrong direction (Rabinovich, 99). This gives a good example of Israel being forceful and acting on its own without consulting the Palestinians. It is an example of a unilateral action from the time period of negotiations. This small example implies Palestinian violence increases towards Israel when Israel tries to impose outcomes onto the Palestinian people.

Despite his party affiliation and platform, Netanyahu’s administration still signed two agreements with the Palestinians: “the Hebron Agreement” and the “Wye River Agreement.” Both agreements were signed under the coercion of the United States. Netanyahu was defeated in the next election by Labor Party leader Ehud Barak, and the

next round of negotiations would be the famous failed Camp David Summit followed by the Taba peace talks in January 2001. The second intifada started after the Camp David Summit and before Taba in September, 2000 and featured extensive Palestinian violence towards Israeli civilians and soldiers. Following Taba, Ariel Sharon was elected Prime Minister of Israel and his first actions were to end all formal negotiations with the Palestinians due to the high levels of violence (Bickerton and Klausner 337-354). Israel and the Palestinians had a “hybrid” relationship in which there were no formal negotiations, but both parties took certain actions towards a possible future agreement.

The reason for the collapse of the peace process is highly contentious and can be directly tied in with the failure of the Camp David Summit, which is considered to be Bill Clinton’s final attempt for a final status permanent agreement. Regardless of its failures, the Camp David Summit did make important progress in the peace process by showing how much each side was willing to compromise acting as a prelude to the Clinton Plan and Taba Summit. The Clinton Plan, which is described clearly in Dennis Ross’ The Missing Peace, identifies Bill Clinton’s guidelines for the creation of a Palestinian State. This was a major step in the process, because it actually laid out the final details to a permanent status agreement. However, Jeremy Pressman clearly points out a few of the problems. Israel’s biggest concern was the “right of return” for Palestinian refugees. Pressman and others argue that in reality few Palestinians would actually want to return to Israel (Pressman). However, this was the key issue for Israelis, and only 28.9% of the Israeli public support the refugee framework discussed at Taba, which would have Israel recognize the right of the Palestinians to return to Israel (Shamir and Shikaki). Pressman’s other main argument for why Camp David failed is that the withdrawal from

the West Bank was to be done in many stages which would have taken decades. Barak's offer at Camp David, it is said that, while he offered 91 percent of the West Bank, only 77 percent was going to be initially given to the Palestinians. Also, only one ninth of the land inside the West Bank annexed by Israel was to be exchanged for land inside Israel. Camp David also failed because of the failure to agree on sovereignty over Jerusalem (Pressman). Following Camp David, it seemed that talks in Taba, Egypt may save the peace process from the Intifada. However, upon his election on February 6, 2001 Ariel Sharon immediately terminated all negotiations with the Palestinians until the violence ended (Bickerton and Klausner 343). After eight years of an effort at a negotiated peace process none of the four areas of dispute were solved, which shows why the process indeed failed.

During the "hybrid period" there were many shades of unilateralism. Ariel Sharon's plan of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip was first introduced in 2004 as a way of attempting to address Israel's occupation of former Palestinian territories and prevent Palestinian violence. However, separation goes back much further. The first part of the disengagement came in 1995 when it was decided by the then ruling Labor Party to build a security barrier completely around the Gaza Strip. In 2003, Israel decided to start building a security barrier around the West Bank, not completely following the 1949 armistice lines. This is a prime example of an action that Israel is imposing its own terms (the map of the fence) onto the Palestinian people. Israel decided the route based on its examination of what is morally and ethically right and gave little input to the Palestinian people (Rabinovich 310-311). The fence is thought by many to define what Israel would want the future border of the Palestinian State to be.

Sharon's unilateral plan only included the evacuation of settlers and troops from the Gaza Strip. According to David Makovsky, a unilateral action was taken by the Israelis in order to solve the problem through the easiest manner. With intense violence happening from 2000-2004, the Israelis believed they could act alone and not be criticized by the rest of the world. In the summer of 2005, the Israelis did withdraw from Gaza. In March, 2006, following Ariel Sharon's incapacitation, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced his "Convergence Plan." Israel was to withdraw unilaterally from the West Bank in 2008 and thus impose a permanent agreement on the Palestinians. Makovsky argues that the United States would have acted as a mediator for the Palestinians, and while it might seem like unilateralism, it would actually have aspects of bilateralism (Makovsky- Olmert). Following the wars in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon in the summer of 2006, Olmert's "convergence plan" is no longer considered to be an option. However, regardless of whether or not Israel chooses to withdraw from the West Bank, restart negotiations, or continue the status quo, Israel has thus already taken a major step in the peace process by permanently removing all settlers and military bases from the Gaza Strip.

The withdrawal from Gaza can therefore be examined to show how it compares to the years of negotiations (1993-2001) and also to the immediate years before its implementation (2001-2005). It must also be acknowledged that there are many other factors that could be other independent variables, changes in leadership of each party due to elections and also a change in the international balance. Although these factors cannot be controlled for purposes of this paper, they must be acknowledged. This includes the many changes in the international system since September 11, such as the war in Iraq and

primarily Israel's conflict with Hezbollah. Keeping in mind that these variables do change, it is still possible to attempt to examine the effects of the withdrawal on both Palestinian violence against Israel and on Palestinian public opinion of Israel.

**Different Answers to the Question:**

In no way can the long term or permanent effects of the Israeli policy change towards taking unilateral actions be examined in this paper. It is far too soon to realize how this important action will impact Israeli Palestinian conflict when examining it in the future. Therefore, we will try to ascertain the short term effects of the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip on Palestinian violence against Israel. Initially, it seems to be simple, that there are three possible options. Violence could increase, decrease, or stay the same. Palestinian violence against Israel is a complicated thing, because of the many ways that it can be defined. In general it refers to acts of violence, including terrorism such as suicide bombings, shootings, stabbings, rocket and mortar attacks, and also violence against Israeli army base and soldiers. Palestinian violence can therefore be sub-defined into different areas showing the particular group of people against which the violence was directed (e.g. soldiers or civilians) and where it occurred (e.g. if it was inside of Israel as it existed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1967, or land subsequently annexed by Israel, such as East Jerusalem).

Some people believed that the level of Palestinian violence would decrease following Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The main argument for this theory is that the Israeli withdrawal would be seen as a sign of peace. Even though the actions taken may be unilateral, it was still seen as adhering to the Roadmap designed by the Quartet. Therefore, even though the Palestinians were not involved in this significant

action, it was still an important step in the peace process, because it showed the Palestinians that the Israelis were serious about peace. Another argument for decreased Palestinian violence against Israel was that the withdrawal demonstrated incredible sacrifice by Israel. Not only was the withdrawal extremely controversial, but many settlers had to be physically removed from their homes. The pain was clear for everyone to see, and in order for any government to do such a thing to its own citizens, they must be willing to take such great sacrifice. It was assumed that such sacrifice would be seen by the Palestinians as an optimistic sign that shows peace is possible and maybe it is time for arms to be laid down. In no way would anyone argue that there would be no Palestinian violence following the withdrawal, merely that the level of violence would decrease. A third argument is that following the second intifada it would be natural for the violence levels to decrease, just as it did following the first intifada. Another reason could also be that some of the violence against Israel was carried out against Israeli settlers and soldiers inside the Gaza Strip and that following a withdrawal from Gaza, which is completely enclosed by a fence, there will naturally be less Palestinian violence against Israel. This argument simply states that the disengagement takes many targets away from the Palestinians. Regardless of the reason, some believed that the level of Palestinian violence should decrease following Israel's unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip.

It may be argued that the level of violence towards Israel would increase following the unilateral Gaza withdrawal. This school of thought is based on two predominate theories. First, the unilateralism displayed by the Israelis could weaken the Palestinian moderate's (Fatah) control of the Palestinians and encourage Palestinian

civilians to become more radical. This is the position that Saeb Erakat took immediately prior to the pullout when he spoke on July 25, 2005 during the presentation of a poll by Khalil Shikaki. There are three major reasons why this might happen. Since disengagement occurred right after a period of violence, Palestinians could believe the withdrawal resulted from the use of violence and not the negotiations of Fatah. Therefore, the moderate would be seen as ineffective. Second, the withdrawal would be seen as a victory for armed resistance against Israel that occurred in the second intifada immediately prior to the announcement of disengagement. This would lead to increased support for extremist violent groups, which in turn increase violence towards Israel and damage the peace process. Erakat even specifically said that unilateral disengagement “is burying the Palestinian peace camp alive.” The third reason the moderate would be weakened is the Gaza withdrawal brought no change in the West Bank, demonstrating that Fatah was unable to take advantage of the political climate to achieve Palestinian statehood. Another main argument for an increased level of violence following the withdrawal also stems from the great pain that was involved for the State of Israel. It was evident to the entire world that the Israeli people were divided when it came to the issue of whether to leave Gaza. There were many protests and sit-ins held on major Israeli roads, and it was clear to the world that a large percentage of Israelis did not support the unilateral withdrawal. This lack of support may be seen as a sign of weakness in the Israeli government and show that many Israelis will never come to terms with the peace process. This could increase the anger from Palestinians and possibly increase their support for violence against Israel.



The third possibility is that there would be no change in the level of Palestinian violence against Israel as a result of the withdrawal. This school of thought would see the withdrawal as having no relation to the level of Palestinian violence and would argue that it would therefore have no effect on it. Rather the withdrawal would affect future policy, not violence. Another argument that the level of Palestinian violence would not change is that there would be an equal mixture of the main arguments laid above, resulting in no change.

It seems clear that there is no obvious impact that the Gaza Strip unilateral disengagement immediately would have on the level of Palestinian violence against Israel. Therefore, it is important to attempt to answer the question without bias toward any of these arguments. Also, it is important to remember that there is still no definite way to prove that one of these arguments is true or will hold true in the end.

### **Research Design:**

The first step to analyzing the effects of the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is to look at the differences and similarities of several years from the peace process along with the past four years, 2003-2006, during which the unilateral process was conceived and implemented. Although the withdrawal occurred in the summer of 2005, it was informally announced in early 2004. This paper will review seven polls conducted during the years 1994-2000. These polls give an excellent distribution of thought through the peace process. During this time control of the government was divided between Labor and Likud. These years can show how the commonalities between the years that represent the highs and lows of the peace process can compare

with the Israeli policy change in the beginning of 2001. Because there was very little change in 2001 and 2002 the last five polls look at the years 2003-2006.

Thanks to polling from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), under the direction of Khalil Shikaki, it is possible to examine reliable public opinion polling of the Palestinian People and is known internationally for its polling work. The Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS), which is now a part of the PSR, conducted all polls prior to May, 2000. Although there is no consistent question asked in every poll, it is possible to analyze the answers to similar and intriguing questions asked throughout the different polls. The attitudes of Palestinian civilians can be seen through these polls, which can perhaps lead to some generalized summaries of how the Palestinian people are reacting to current events. The polls included only Palestinians living inside the Palestinian territories, and identify whether the respondent lived in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. These polls do not include Palestinians living in other countries or anywhere outside of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

I have chosen 12 polls done by PSR and CPRS. As previously mentioned, seven of the polls were conducted between 1993 and 2000. I also selected one poll from each of the years being studies in the violence count (2003- 2006). All four of these polls were conducted in December of the year being examined and thus give a good sample of the feelings and thoughts of the Palestinians at the culmination of the year. There is also one additional poll from 2006. The polls that were conducted from 1993 through 2000 give a good retrospective on what the atmosphere was like among the Palestinian people from the start of the formal peace process all the way until it collapsed.

When examining public opinion polling regarding the Arab- Israeli conflict, it is important to remember that there can be the presence of certain biases. According to “Public Opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian Two-Level Game”, by Jacob Shamir and Khalil Shakiki, there were several studies that showed Israelis were more likely to agree with a proposal that was submitted by Israel, than if the same proposal was submitted by the Arabs. The converse was found for Palestinians. For example, Israelis may be more likely to think unilateralism was a good idea because it was done completely by the Israeli Government, while they may not have actually agreed with the same plan if it was thought up by the Palestinians. There is actually an example of this in PSR poll #37 regarding the Wye River Memorandum, which was heavily encouraged on the Palestinians by the Americans. Interestingly, 57.1% of Palestinians thought that the Israelis gained more from Wye than the Palestinians. 77.6% believed that the Palestinians would implement the agreement, while 72.8% did not think the Israelis would implement the Wye memorandum. These numbers clearly show a lack of trust in the Israelis and the belief that the Israelis are being more decisive in the actual peace process. This is an indication of why perhaps more Palestinians support the general peace process than they do this specific agreement. These findings agree with the thoughts of Shamir and Shakiki in showing the general lack of trust from both sides toward the other and that there is bias in the answers.

The next step after reviewing the public opinion polling is to fully understand how the events of each year and the timing may have impacted the results. This analysis will help show how the unilateral withdrawal has affected the Palestinian public opinion towards Israel regarding several topics, including whether or not armed resistance should

be used to achieve a Palestinian State. The results will then be used to examine the effects of the unilateral withdraw on violence. The public opinion polling analysis is crucial, because the examination starts with the beginning of the formal peace process and therefore anything that happens regarding unilateralism can be more easily correlated because of the amount of data that is available.

The second part of the data analysis is the formal evaluation of how the level of Palestinian violence against Israel changed in the years from immediately prior to and after the unilateral withdrawal. In order to quantify Palestinian violence, several terms and definitions must be presented. First and most importantly the level of violence here is measured through a “violence count.” A violence count is defined as any attack by a Palestinian that resulted in the death of at least one Israeli, civilian or soldier. For the purposes of this paper, a violence count can also be any suicide bombing, in which the bomber detonated himself or herself in a clear and purposeful manner trying to attack an Israeli target, which resulted in at least 10 Israeli injuries. This number was chosen to ensure that large scale suicide bombings that did not kill any Israelis would still be included. Using LexisNexis online research database, I ran a search through the *New York Times* looking for “Israel” in the headline and lead paragraph and the word “killed” in the full text. This provided what seems to be a near accurate count of the violence counts for the years 2003 to 2006. The most important part is that the definitions remained consistent throughout the counting of the attacks. Regardless of whether it includes every single violence count that meets the above definition, it does provide a consistent count. The violence counts were put into an excel spreadsheet that includes every single day for the four years. The counts were also subdivided into five different

categories based on who they were directed against and where they took place. The first category is violence against Israeli civilians inside of Israel's pre-1967 borders (including land annexed afterwards by Israel, such as East Jerusalem). The second is violence towards Israel civilians inside the West Bank and Gaza (this is violence against settlers). The third is violence against Israeli soldiers that was provoked by Israel. This is defined as any violence count that can be attributed to the death of an Israeli soldier that was killed in an operation against Palestinians. The fourth category is any violence that caused the unprovoked death of an Israeli soldier. This would be any Israeli soldier death by a Palestinian attack that was not in the third category. The fifth and final category is any violence count that can be attributed to kassam rocket fired from a Palestinian inside the West Bank or Gaza strip. It should be clear that these all of these counts only include those carried out by Palestinians, which does not include Israeli Arabs or non-Palestinian terrorists attacking Israel, towards Israelis, which also does include Israeli-Arabs. The count for the years 2003-2006 can then analyzed to show how in a post negotiation setting, the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza affected violence from the Palestinians towards Israel.

### **Part Three: Presentation of Data**

The public opinion polling of Palestinians is a good way to measure the reaction of the Palestinian people to the policy strategies initiated by the Israeli government. It is important to remember that there are many other independent variables that are responsible for the sentiments of the people in the polling. This could range from which leaders and political parties are in power to the level of Israeli military involvement. It is

therefore necessary to interpret the polling with an open mind, and some degree of skepticism.

One of the most important independent variables that may contribute to the answers in the following public opinion polling is the current Israeli policy. Unfortunately many of the questions in the polling are not asked in the same way throughout the different polls. This is why it is necessary to collect questions from many different polls spanning the 14 year period between 1993 and 2006. All of the polling information that will be presented in this section can be found in Table 1. Many of these questions that are categorized together for the purposes of this paper are not precisely the same. For example, question grouping 1 is “do you support the agreement?” This question refers to the agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis at the specific time, so naturally each question is worded differently, but at the same time they are measuring the general support for the specific agreements that have been introduced.

Another major concern with the presentation of the data is that the questions asked in the CPRS polls mostly have the answer choices being “support,” “oppose, or “don’t know/ no opinion.” In the PSR polls, many, but not all, of the questions present the choices of “strongly support,” “support,” “oppose,” “strongly oppose,” or “don’t know/no opinion.” In this paper, I have elected to aggregate “strongly support” and “support” into a single response for purposes of comparison with previous polls, and similarly for “oppose” and “strongly oppose.”

The most fundamental issue that is trying to be resolved out of these questions is how Israeli policy changes have affected the peace process and levels of Palestinian violence against Israel. Thanks to the polling we are able to look at data of both support

for the peace process and support for violent attacks against Israel. This is complicated because sometimes the question is whether they supported attacks against Israeli targets in general and sometimes the question is specified against who they were targeting, such as settlers, soldiers or civilians in Israel. These questions are of even greater use because they can further attempt to ascertain and identify the Palestinian sentiments about violence against different kinds of targets.

The first poll being examined, CPRS Poll #1 conducted from September 10-11 1993, entitled “The Palestinian-Israeli Agreement: Gaza-Jericho First”, looks at the Palestinian response to the first Oslo Accords, which is considered to be the first formal agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians and thus serves as an excellent start in the study of Palestinian public opinion during the peace process. 64.9% of Palestinian people surveyed “supported” the proposal and 44.9% thought that the agreement would eventually lead to a Palestinian State. Although the majority of Palestinians thought the Agreement was a good thing, less than half of them thought it would actually lead to a Palestinian State. In CPRS poll #20 reflecting the Oslo 2 peace agreement, conducted in October 1995, 72.1% of Palestinians “supported” the agreement, a 7.2% increase over Oslo. This would turn out to be the highest Palestinian support any of the major agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, based on these surveys.

The questions regarding specific agreements show a reaction to current policy between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Wye River Memorandum, which was accomplished under the auspices of the Netanyahu Likud government and was viewed to have been signed under American pressure, did not get as much support from the Palestinians. This may be a result of thinking about the force used by the Netanyahu

government onto the Palestinians. CPRS poll #37, which was conducted from November 12-14, 1998, gives a clear representation of Palestinian sentiment towards the already enacted policies of the Netanyahu Likud government. Interestingly, 58.6% of Palestinians “support” the agreement, while 35.3% “oppose” it. This is a near 15% drop in support of the agreement compared with Oslo 2. Wye was an important agreement though, because it actually further enforced the principles of Oslo 1 and 2. In the Wye Memorandum, Netanyahu agreed to transfer lands to the PA, Palestinian prisoner releases, a larger Palestinian Police force and kept the May 4, 1999 deadline on the Permanent Status Agreement, only five months away from the signing of this Agreement..

PSR Poll #10 was taken from December 4-9 2003. The Poll focused on the recently released Geneva Accord and the Roadmap sponsored by the US, Russia, the European Community, and the UN, also known as the "Quartet." The Geneva Accord refers to a document that was sponsored by influential left wing Israelis and Palestinians who were not in power and thought they had found an agreement that would work in a time when all negotiations had been cut off. However, only 25.4% of Palestinians surveyed “supported” the agreement, and only 4.7% “strongly supported” it. Even though this agreement was not signed by either government, it still shows the negative feelings of the Palestinians during the time period to this particular agreement that tried to continue the peace process.

In PSR poll #22, conducted from December 14-16, 2006, the Palestinian people were asked about their response to the “Roadmap.” The “Roadmap” calls for a final settlement to be achieved in three years. Surprisingly, even though this has never been



formally signed by either government, 49.1% of Palestinians were in “support” of the “Roadmap,” while 45.4% “oppose” it. While, these numbers aren’t nearly as supportive as for the Oslo 2 agreement, they still illustrate a significant increase from the Geneva Accord, and may show that the Palestinians are starting to become more willing to support actual agreements.

While Palestinian support of these agreements is necessary for a true and peaceful long term solution, in order for these agreements to be created there must also be general support for the peace process and general negotiations. This is question category 2 in Table 1, which contains questions that ask if the people are either in support of negotiations or in support of the peace process. These numbers may be even more important than the data regarding specific agreements, because of the general bias towards the author and general terms of a particular agreement, such as a possible timeframe.

In CPRS poll #19, which was taken at the end of August and the beginning of September, 1995, 70.6% of Palestinians “supported” the current negotiations, while only 18.8% were “opposed.” These are very similar to the levels of support for Oslo 2, and show how at first the negotiations were directly tied into the agreements that resulted from them. However, this would not be the case in any of the other polls. In CPRS poll #22, taken in February and March of 1996, 78.3% of Palestinians “supported” the continuation of the then current peace process, while only 16.4% thought it should be stopped. Of the polls being examined that were taken before 2003, this is the highest percentage of Palestinians that “supported” the peace process and the lowest that “opposed” it. While this came shortly after Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination, since these are

only Palestinian respondents, Rabin's immediate predecessor Shimon Peres seemed like an ideal candidate to continue the peace process as a chief architect of Oslo and would run his campaign on the continuation of the peace process.

The 1996 election of Netanyahu and his stagnant policies paid a price on Palestinian support for the peace process. In only four years evidenced in Table 1, Palestinian support dropped by a consistent margin in CPRS poll #37 and then again in CPRS poll #48, taken from March 30 to April 1, 2000, in which 71.1% of Palestinians support the current peace process, while 25.4% oppose it, which represents a significant drop in support and gain in opposition of the peace process. This shows the continued weakening of Palestinian support for a negotiated peace process leading up to its ultimate crash later that year. However, the general mood was still optimistic prior to the final collapse of the multilateral negotiation environment that existed from 1993 through the summer of 2000.

In the post negotiation "hybrid" stage that has been occurring since 2001 Palestinian support for return to the negotiation table has significantly increased. As shown in Table 1, by the end of 2004 in PSR poll #14, conducted December 1-5, 2004, the Palestinians overwhelmingly "supported" an immediate return to the negotiation table by both sides. Despite the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza being only 6 months away, it seems that the Palestinian people didn't want the Israelis to be able to dictate the terms of any solution. This may explain why 80.1% of Palestinians were then in favor of negotiations, a higher number than at any point during the actual peace process. However, this desire for negotiations would be short lived when at the end of 2005, the year the disengagement occurred, PSR poll #18 was conducted from December 6-8. In

this poll, each Palestinian was asked if they supported the “Roadmap,” sponsored by the Quartet, only this time it was asked in context to negotiations. Only 59.3% of Palestinians supported a return to the negotiating tables. This indicates that immediately after the unilateral disengagement, the Palestinian people had less support for the peace process. Again in 2006, in PSR poll #22, only 61.8% supported the possibility that Hamas negotiate with the Israelis, while 33.7% opposed it. These are similar figures to 2005 and may also be influenced by the armed conflict in Gaza in the summer of 2006. While these numbers still show a strong support for the peace process, they are significantly less than those numbers seen in 1995. This may show that the Israeli policy change to unilateralism had negatively affected Palestinian support for negotiations.

The most important question in terms of analyzing the level of Palestinian violence towards the Israelis is whether Palestinians support the attacks against Israel. Unfortunately as previously mentioned, the polls do not provide consistent questioning regarding this topic. In question category #3, the question is phrased simply regarding any armed attack against Israel.

In CPRS polls #37 and #48, and PSR poll #1, there is a consistent increase in support for Palestinian armed attacks against Israel. In the CPRS polls the Palestinians are asked during the multilateral negotiation stage. In 1998, after the Wye River Conference, more Palestinians opposed attacks against Israeli targets than supported them. Over the next two years of stagnation and no implementation, the support for attacks increased slightly. However, in PSR poll #1, taken just four months after CPRS #48, 51.6% of Palestinians supported attacks against Israel, while 42.7% opposed such attacks. In less than two years there had been a 10% shift in the direction of support for

the attacks. The second intifada started only a little more than one month after this poll was conducted. A similar question was asked during the “hybrid” stage, in PSR poll #18. Only this time in the post withdrawal poll, the question was worded by asking if Palestinians supported attacks from Gaza against Israeli targets. Nearly 35% of Palestinians “supported” such attacks, while more than 60% were “opposed.” This is a dramatic change and may be a sign that Palestinians were less in favor of violence after disengagement. However, the wording of this question draws special interest. The question is whether Palestinians support “armed attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israeli targets.” Therefore, it seems that Palestinians want to end attacks only from the Gaza Strip. In fact, 8% more of Gazans oppose these type of attacks when compared with Palestinians in the West Bank.

The other form of the question asks specifically against whom the Palestinians support armed attacks. In question 4, the question addresses violence against settlers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in question 5 against soldiers, and in question 6 against Israeli civilians inside of Israel. Each of these categories is separate and represents a different target. However, the settler and soldier may be seen as similar by the Palestinian respondent as they both operate in territory that Palestinians consider their land and therefore will be more likely to support attacks against them. These questions are asked in CPRS poll #19 and PSR polls #10, #14, and #20. As can be seen in Table 1, the settler and army target numbers are indeed similar and within a couple of percentage points, which only helps further demonstrate the trends seen in these polls.

CPRS poll #19 represents for this question the general response during the highlight of the multilateral negotiation stages. The support for attacks against Israeli

civilians was 18.3%, a much smaller percentage than the 67.6% that supported attacks against soldiers. This is a near 50% difference and shows how greatly different Palestinians feelings were towards attacks against civilians versus attacks against Israeli soldiers. These numbers jump up by a large margin in the 2003 and 2004 polls. In 2003, over 85% of Palestinians support attacks against soldiers and settlers, while 47.5% support attacks against civilians. This is a large difference from 1995 and it shows the large difference in Palestinian mentality between the different times. In 2004, the amounts were very similar to 2003, with only a slight decrease in support for attacks against settlers and soldiers, and a slight increase in support for attacks against civilians. However, these changes are not significantly different. Regardless, these polls show a clear difference in attitude towards specific targets between the multilateral negotiation stage and the hybrid stage of the 2000's. In PSR poll #20, taken in June, 2006, only 42% of Palestinians "opposed" violence towards civilians, which shows a further likelihood of the hybrid system increasing the Palestinian support for violence against citizens.

Unexpectedly, this number is far different from the support for attacks from Gaza at the end of 2005. Even more surprising is that in the June, 2006 poll, 69.1% of people in the Gaza Strip "supported" attacks against Israeli civilians compared with only 48.5% of people in the West Bank. This further shows that people inside of Gaza who had felt the impact of the withdrawal the greatest actually support violence even more post-disengagement.

Two significant questions were asked only in the "hybrid" polls, which may help explain some of the results seen in the second part of the research that looks to analyze the specific impact of the Gaza withdrawal on Palestinian violence towards Israel. The

first is question category #7, which is whether armed confrontation has helped Palestinian rights in a way that negotiations could not. This is simply asking whether armed attacks are better for Palestinians than negotiations and the peace process. This question was asked in each of the polls taken in the end of the years 2003-2006.

In the 2003 and 2004 polls there is no real significant difference in these numbers, with approximately 64% of Palestinians believing that armed confrontation helped them in ways negotiations could not. These numbers are not surprising as they help explain the recent level of violence. In 2005, not shockingly after disengagement occurred, there was a 5% increase in belief that armed conflict helped the Palestinians more than negotiations. This is directly correlated with the answer to question category #8 concerning whether Israel's unilateral withdrawal was a victory for armed resistance. As can be seen in Table 1, these numbers are high and grow from 2004 to 2005, which shows over 82% of Palestinians believe that it was indeed a victory. This explains why Palestinians who are finally seeing the end to the overt Israel occupation in Gaza believe that conflict has helped them more than negotiations. This may be one of the leading factors that led to the election of Hamas in 2006 to a majority of the Palestinian Parliament. However, by the end of 2006 there was a dramatic change to less than 50% of Palestinians that thought armed resistance has helped more than negotiations. This is most likely because the Palestinian situation has not improved inside of the Gaza Strip since the evacuation of settlers and the Israeli military presence. Also in 2006 Israel conducted several military operations in Gaza, especially in the summer and fall. These polls suggest certain trends in the Palestinian perspective to the different types of policy conducted by the Israelis.

The second part of the research, which is much simpler to present, represents a study of the actual level of violence. The primary action to be looked at in this part is Israeli unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip that took place in August and September of 2005. The data being presented in this subject is collected and tabulated in Table 2.

Before the actual presentation of the data it must be remembered that this was collected using the definitions that were described in the research design collection. These statistics do not include every act of violence that meets my definition. Rather this research includes every act of violence under my definition that was run through the search previously mentioned. The New York Times occasionally might not include an act of violence that could meet my definition. However, since this research was collected in a consistent manner, it is hoped that the results demonstrate the appropriate trends that occurred in the region, even if it does not include every single attack.

The first and perhaps most surprising observation is how dramatically violence has decreased from 2003 to 2006 (see Table 2). The violent attack totals in 2006 are less than 20% of those in 2003. There is also a relatively consistent decline in total attacks in every year, with it falling first by 30, then 14, and finally by 9 to 12 in 2006. This shows a clear decline in Palestinian violence towards Israel under the definitions of this research project. The 64 attacks in 2003 represent nearly half of the total attacks found. Of those attacks, 43 took place in the first six months of 2003. This shows that most of the attacks happened in the very beginning of this time period. However, every other year the attacks are distributed relatively evenly during the year. The data is using small numbers, with the last year standing out in particular, which may show that this is not statistically

significant. However, it apparently shows a decrease in Palestinian violence towards Israel. The question is then inherently if this has anything to do with Israeli policy.

Following the disengagement from the Gaza Strip by the Israelis, there have been only 20 total attacks, according to the definitions being used. This is an outstanding figure, because there was a total of 131 attacks during the four year time period. These numbers are misleading though; because of the 21 attacks in 2005 there were 8 after the Gaza withdrawal, which only accounts for four months of the year. The distribution is equally weighted over the 12 months of 2006. This shows that immediately following the disengagement, there was still a lot of violence towards Israeli targets. The violence only fades in 2006 with consistent numbers throughout that year. The gradual significant decline in all violence over the four year period indicates that perhaps the disengagement did not play as large of a role in the decrease of Palestinian violence.

I have categorized violence by the type of victim that was targeted. These five categories can help give a better idea of what kind of attacks these were and possibly give some sort of motivation. This can also help this data tie into the public opinion polling section. The first category is attacks against civilians inside Israel. This refers to most of the attacks that we would consider to be traditional terrorism, such as suicide bombings of public buses, restaurants, and other places inside of Israeli annexed territory. These numbers consistently decrease along with the total attacks, but they decrease at a more rapid rate. The percentage of these kinds of attacks on civilians inside Israel also decreases for each of the four years. This is significant and shows that these traditional forms of terrorist attacks that were so prevalent in the beginning of the second intifada no longer seem to play as big a role. There were no such attacks during the last eight



months of 2006, the longest stretch by far in this study, compared to 2003, which saw only one month without an attack against civilians in Israel.

The second and third categories are attacks against soldiers, whether provoked during an Israeli raid or unprovoked at a checkpoint, military base, or normal patrol. There is no clear trend among attacks towards soldiers over the years, except that the percentage increases in unprovoked attacks from 2003 to 2004 and then decrease to the 2003 numbers in 2005. From disengagement until the start of the war inside the Gaza Strip through the capture of Giliad Shalit in late June, 2006 there were only 3 attacks that resulted in the deaths of Israeli soldiers. In fact until that operation there were only 4 total attacks against soldiers since disengagement. This shows the general lack of successful operations against Israel soldiers. This may be the result of the difficulty to kill soldiers in recent times, after all Israel waged a war inside of Gaza this summer and there were few Israeli soldiers that died because of the way in which the war was engaged. Following the withdrawal from Gaza, there were clearly fewer soldiers to attack, as had been removed from the Gaza Strip.

The fourth category represents attacks against Israeli civilians living in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. These numbers were relatively constant in 2003 and 2004, but increased in 2005 and 2006 in their percent of total attacks, especially before and after disengagement in 2005. This is even more interesting, because after disengagement, these attacks could only be against settlers living inside of the West Bank, since none were left inside the Gaza Strip. This may indicate that, if the Gaza withdrawal was viewed as the result of violence, the same strategy of attacking settlers might also force a withdrawal from the West Bank.

The fifth and last category is attacks that caused Israeli deaths by rocket or mortar fire. Unfortunately there is no way of quantifying the increasing rocket fire. Following the Gaza Disengagement there was a large increase in these attacks from the Gaza Strip. However, since very few cause damage or death it is very hard to put them into this data. However, it is still seen how they have played a larger role in Israeli violence deaths in recent years. This is one of the biggest problems facing Israel today, as after the withdrawal, there is no military presence to stop rockets from being fired from Gaza. Throughout the summer of 2006 this remained a very large problem that Israel is still trying to address. However, these attacks have remained since the withdrawal. What cannot be accurately identified through my research is the dramatic increase in rocket attacks against Israel since the withdrawal. According to the Israel Foreign Ministry, in 2006 there were 861 “rockets” fired at Israel, compared with 222 in 2005. However, these numbers do not include “mortar” attacks, which the Foreign Ministry says have declined from 1213 in 2004 to only 57 in 2006 (The nature and extent of Palestinian terrorism, 2006). Rocket attacks, which use Kassam rockets, have increased significantly since disengagement and became the Palestinians main striking force against Israeli civilians in 2006. However, the rocket and mortar attacks have extremely low success rates as can be seen through the violence count attributed to them through this research design. Since these attacks have very low casualty rates, they are may not be a major player in the situation. Regardless of this, the fact that they are being launched in such high quantities is a major concern for the Israeli public, especially those citizens who live within range of the current rockets. Because the Kassam rockets can be launched from inside of the Gaza Strip with little forewarning and it is hard to catch the perpetrators, any

increase in such attacks must be taken seriously by the Israelis. Due to their ease and simplicity, these attacks, although less lethal can play a major role in Palestinian violence against Israel. Therefore, they still must be given the same attention as the other types of attacks used by Palestinians against Israel.

The Israel Foreign Ministry data, which is the only reliable figures on violent attacks against Israel, agrees with the findings of this section. In fact, the trends that they present for Israeli casualties are incredibly similar to the findings of this paper (The nature and extent of Palestinian terrorism, 2006). This shows that although this study may not have included every attack, it was consistent in finding the correct trends in data. Therefore, this data provides a legitimate count of successful Palestinian attacks against Israelis from 2003-2006.

#### **Part 4: Conclusion and Recommendations**

The first part of the research showed that the Palestinian “support” for attacks against Israel has increased since the beginning of the formal Peace Process. From the polling it also seems that the unilateral disengagement was viewed as a victory for Palestinian violence. With this data it is expected that Palestinian violence towards Israelis would increase or at least stay at the same level between the years 2003- 2006. However, from the second part of the research it is evident that the exact opposite happened, which agrees with the higher support for the peace process (but still low in comparison to surveys during the peace process) at the end of 2005 and 2006. Palestinian civilian support for attacks against Israel increases while the actual amount of attacks and

level of violence towards Israel decreased. These are two conflicting statements, which may have several explanations.

The first and foremost conclusion from this project is that indeed the Israeli policy change to the unilateral withdrawal used in the summer of 2005 had the effect of increasing Palestinian support for violence against Israel. This is evident through multiple polls. First, compared to the era of negotiations in the mid 90's the support level throughout the hybrid era of the 2000's was much higher. The key polls though actually show that through the end of 2005 there was a strong feeling that the withdrawal was a victory for armed resistance and accomplished more than negotiations could. This makes perfect sense when one takes a step back to examine the situation. Despite all of the negotiations throughout the 1990's the only act that ever came about resulting in significant Israeli troop and settler withdrawals from territory claimed by the Palestinians, was indeed Israel's unilateral withdrawal. This disengagement came with no help from the Palestinian negotiators. Therefore, the only explanation to the Palestinians, who viewed this as a good thing, was that it was brought about through violence and thus was a victory.

The Palestinians believed they could achieve further victories by increasing or maintaining their level of violence against Israelis. The eventual disengagement from the West Bank and the formation of the Palestinian State were after all a big part of Olmert's Convergence plan. However, there is no formal evidence here that violence actually increased against Israelis. In fact, the level of violence actually decreased and 2006 saw the least number of attacks that resulted in Israeli deaths in the past four years.

There are several reasons why the support for violent attacks has increased, while the actual attacks themselves have decreased. The first reason that should be given the most attention is that the Palestinians are not able to attack as many Israeli targets as before. It should be remembered that this research is only looking at attacks that resulted in the death of an Israeli. Therefore, we are only looking at attacks that accomplished their goal and in no way shows how many attacks were attempted and foiled. The only credible source for this information comes from the Israel Ministry of Foreign affairs. Their releases say that, in 2005 15 suicide bombing attacks were prevented, compared to 71 that were prevented in 2006. These are both lower than the 184 and 119 suicide attacks foiled in 2003 and 2004 respectively; however, they show that there was a sharp increase in attempts in 2006 post Gaza disengagement (The nature and extent of Palestinian Terrorism, 2006). This still does not fully explain why support for attacks was high even before disengagement.

One of the biggest reasons why Palestinian attacks have decreased is that they are harder to carry out because of the new West Bank security barrier. This security barrier, which is composed of both fence and concrete sections, was approved by the Israel government on July 31, 2001. Since that date the fence has been slowly constructed with many of the original routes altered to adhere to Israeli Supreme Court decisions and humanitarian issues. The route was last altered on April 30, 2006 to include fewer Palestinians and less of the West Bank on the Israeli side of the fence. (Israel's Security Fence). Many people believed that the barrier would be a key to the final border in Olmert's Convergence plan. The security barrier is still under construction to this date with many unfinished areas, and large areas of the barrier are still not completed.

According to B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization, only 58.04% of the barrier's April 30<sup>th</sup> plan has been completed. Regardless of how much of the 703 kilometer proposed barrier has actually been completed, the most important security sites were finished around 2003 (Separation Barrier). Therefore, the barrier has made it physically harder for the Palestinians to carry out attacks against Israelis and serves as a successful defense.

The other major physical reason for fewer attacks is that the Gaza withdrawal has given Palestinian terrorists significantly fewer targets. Through the disengagement, Israel removed both settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip. This has not only removed targets from Palestinian violence but it has enclosed over a million Palestinians within the Gaza Strip, which is completely surrounded by a security barrier. This means that all of the terrorists from the Gaza Strip have been completely cut off from participating in violence outside of mortar and rocket attacks. This has reduced the number of Palestinian attacks against Israelis and severely limited their ability to launch more. Therefore, regardless of how much the Palestinians want to attack Israel they just simply do not have the same capacity that they once did, and their targets are more difficult to reach.

The second major reason why the Palestinians support more violence and yet have had fewer successful attacks is due to the belief that the disengagement was due to the victory of armed resistance. Saeb Erakat's words rang true in February, 2006, when the Palestinian Parliamentary elections resulted in the election of Hamas, a militant terrorist as well as humanitarian organization, to a majority and control of the PA. This was the first time since the start of the peace process that Fatah, the moderate party of Yasser

Arafat, was not in control of the government. Hamas has had to legitimize in order to successfully run the PA. Their election has brought frequent clashes in the Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip, between different Palestinian factions. In essence a civil war has broken out among the Palestinians since their election.

The election of Hamas may also explain why violent attacks have decreased towards Israeli targets. The first reason is that the election of Hamas, instead of exacerbating their extremism, has actually made them more moderate. With having to worry about the daily governance of the Palestinian people, Hamas no longer has the same ability to launch terrorist attacks against Israel. Several ceasefires have been implemented between the Palestinians and the Israelis throughout 2006, in order to try to calm the region. Therefore, the election of Hamas, rather than furthering the Palestinians hatred against Israel may have encouraged Hamas closer to becoming a legitimate partner in a future peace process, although this currently seems more unlikely. However, they still at times encourage attacks against Israel following Israeli attacks on Palestinians, like those seen in mid April, 2007 that left nine Palestinians dead. (CNN)

The second major reason for why the election of Hamas may have led to fewer attacks against Israelis is that the recent attacks by Palestinians against other Palestinians may mean that some Palestinians extremists have at least temporarily turned their attention away from the Israelis and against their own people. Thus, Hamas' attention has perhaps shifted to stopping the fighting inside the Palestinian territories or perhaps to even fighting against Fatah, by using their political control and police force to either stop the fighting or to try to help their own militants succeed.

Perhaps the most interesting and obvious counterexample to the decrease Palestinian violence towards Israel is that an entire war was fought this summer inside the Gaza Strip between the Palestinians and the Israelis. On June 25, 2006 Palestinian terrorists attacked an Israeli army base killing two IDF soldiers and capturing Giliad Shalit a corporal in the IDF. This was the first kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian terrorists since 1994 and is considered by Israel to be the worst type of attack that can happen. Israel's response came three days later with the launch of Operation Summer Rains. The attacks and raids inside the Gaza Strip continued until November 26, 2006. However, despite high Palestinian casualties, this operation resulted in very few Israeli army deaths. This explains why the violence count in this thesis did not increase for this war that was fought with the Palestinians. Unlike in Lebanon, Israel was very familiar with the territory in the Gaza Strip and could fight the war on its own terms without worrying about international pressure.

In recent years, Israel has experienced fewer deaths as the result of Palestinian violence. Because the violence resulting in Israeli deaths continues to decrease it can be concluded that the change in policy to unilateralism did not increase Palestinian violence towards Israel, regardless of increase Palestinian "support" for violence. In my opinion this means that Israel recognized its ability to take the situation completely in its own hands and not see perceive it would experience any repercussions. Even though Olmert's initial convergence plan calling for a unilateral withdrawal from vast amounts of the West Bank has been discarded, there have been little repercussions because of the withdrawal from Gaza. Even though the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was seen by the majority of Palestinians as a victory for armed resistance, which may have resulted



in the election of Hamas, it has made Israelis safer in one sense, while also deepening Palestinian Anger. During the period of negotiations in the mid 1990's the Palestinians still engaged in violence, and yet there was no success in the peace process. Unilateralism has given Israel very little incentive to negotiate with the Palestinians on a future deal. In fact, while the Palestinians continue to fight among themselves and try to control their own people it seems that Israel has been happy to sit on the sidelines and worry about more pressing issues such as the Second Lebanon War fought this past summer.

**Things I would change if I did it again:**

While I am satisfied with the results of this thesis and they appear to be near correct when crosschecked with Israel's Foreign Ministry data, there are several aspects I would change if I could do it again and had more time to invest in this project. The first issue and probably the one I had the biggest problems with was the actual violence count. The New York Times, although reliable, does not include every single attack that happened in Israel. I feel this data was consistent in what was not included, but I felt that it was leaving out a few attacks each year that would have fit under my definition. The other major problem with the violence count is that it only looked at attacks that resulted in Israeli deaths. If more time was given, a count could have been developed with stricter definitions that would have given a much higher count. However, just to get the count included here resulted in reading through thousands of New York Times articles. I would also want to get better data on Kassam rockets. Outside of the rare estimate from the Israeli government I could not find any kind of way to count these attacks since such attacks are only sporadically reported on in America or even the online version of the

Israeli newspapers. This Kassam rocket count would have been helpful in comparing types of attacks before and after disengagement.

The timeline for the project is also something I would have changed. Looking back at the project it would have been helpful to run a violence count from 1991-2006 looking at every Israeli policy shift. Perhaps in a bigger project with much more time invested these results would yield better comparison for the comparison of unilateral policy versus negotiations. However, I still agree with my decision to start the count in 2003 in order to achieve a count that would compare the time immediately before and after the withdrawal was even introduced.

### **Policy Recommendations and Conclusions:**

In doing research for this project it crossed my mind that nearly every single Middle East expert agrees that trust is the most important factor that must be present before any kind of solution can even be discussed. The Palestinians and Israelis must fully trust each other. It has been almost seven years since there was any serious attempt toward negotiation and it doesn't look promising that negotiations will occur come any time soon. It is my opinion that acting outside of negotiations only exacerbated the inclination of both sides to avoid further negotiations. The results from the polling are clear that armed resistance led Palestinians to believe they attained more results than negotiations could have. Even though these numbers are dropping, they still constitute a majority of Palestinian opinion. On the Israeli side, there have been little repercussions since the end of the second intifada without negotiations during this time period. It seems that they have little incentive to return to the table. This mechanism must be reversed,

because as the polling shows, there is less support for violence during times of successful negotiations.

The further Israel and the Palestinians are removed from negotiations, the harder it will be to return. Right now they must be brought together and work things out in a well conducted process. They must each learn to trust each other, which was a key failing of the Oslo peace process. In Oslo, deadlines were set too early and did not take into account the likelihood of change in leadership and different political atmospheres. It also didn't specify what should happen if the deadlines were not met, meaning the agreements were all or nothing. In any new peace process, the Israelis and the Palestinians must sit down and talk to each other about their concerns and not just walk away when something doesn't go their way.

Trust is the key word. The burden lies on both sides to prove to the other that they can be trusted. The Palestinians must show they will not sponsor terrorism and stop all violence towards Israelis, while at the same time being able to control their own people. Israel must show the Palestinians that as long as the Palestinians are trying to do their part to stop terrorism then they will not reply after every attack by an extremist with its full arsenal and also give Palestinians more rights. At the same time all prisoners that are being held unfairly must be released, including Giliad Shalit and hundreds of Palestinians in Israeli jails. These are tough actions to accomplish, but it is my opinion that they must be met first before any deadlines or solutions are negotiated. The Palestinians and Israelis must learn that they are permanent neighbors and that not one people is going to completely win this conflict. In simple words, they are stuck next to each other so they might as well play nice.

Slowly, once trust between the two sides is built and they are talking to each other at the negotiation table, only then can actions start being implemented. They must realize that they are not reinventing the wheel; the framework for a solution is already close to being in place. The progress made throughout the 1990's in the different rounds of negotiations must not be forgotten, but rather utilized as the basis for a final solution to the conflict. A Palestinian state should not be something that is rushed into, but rather slowly formed. Ideas should be implemented, but the time should be taken to do them right. The Palestinian moderate must be rebuilt and negotiations must be seen as accomplishing more than violence could ever do. Once these factors come into place then solutions can start to happen. This is not something that can happen in the next few years, but over the next few decades when mentalities can change.

Table 1:

Question	Answer:	1 1993	19 1995s	20 1995o	22 1996	37 1998	48 2000p	1 2000a	10 2003	14 2004	18 2005	22 2006	#20 2006b
<b><u>Support Agreement:</u></b>	Strongly Support								2.6			4.7	
#1	Support	64.9		72.1		58.6			22.8			44.4	
	Oppose	27.9		17.5		35.3			39.3			35	
	Strongly Oppose								21.3			10.4	
	No Opinion/ don't know	6.6		10.4		6.1			14			5.4	
<b><u>Support Peace Process</u></b>	Strongly Support									23.5	5.5	22.7	
#2	Support		70.60		78.3	75.2	71.1		56.6	54.3		39.1	
	Oppose		18.8		16.4	21.2	25.4		15.4	28		24.6	
	Strongly Oppose								2.7	7.8		9.1	
	No Opinion/ don't know		10.6		5.3	3.7	3.5		1.8	4.4		4.6	
<b><u>Support Armed Attacks against Israel</u></b>	Yes				21.1	41.2	44	51.6				6.5	
#3	No				70.1	53.1	49.2	42.7				29.3	
	Not Sure				8.7	5.7	6.8	5.7				48.9	
												11.2	
												4.1	
<b><u>Support Armed attacks against Settlers</u></b>	Strongly Support								52	44.5			
#4	Support		69.2						34.2	38.6			
	Oppose		24.3						9.9	12.4			
	Strongly Oppose								1.1	1.7			
	No Opinion/ don't know		6.5						2.7	2.8			

Question	Answer:	1993	1995s	1995o	1996	1998	2000p	2000a	2003	2004	2005	2006	2006b
<b><u>Soldiers in WB and Gaza:</u></b> <b>#5</b>	Strongly Support								55.5	44.4			
	Support		67.6						31.4	39.6			
	Oppose		23.7						9.2	11.4			
	Strongly Oppose								1.1	2			
	No Opinion/ don't know		8.7						2.7	2.7			
<b><u>Civilians</u></b> <b>#6</b>	Strongly Support								25.1	22.5			24.7
	Support		18.3						22.4	26.9			31.4
	Oppose		73.9						41.8	40.9			36.2
	Strongly Oppose								7.7	6.9			5.8
	No Opinion/ don't know		7.8						2.9	2.8			2
<b><u>Did armed confrontation so far help Palestinian rights in a way that negotiations could not</u></b>													
<b>#7</b>	Definitely Yes								28.6	23.4	24.5	15.7	
	Yes								35.2	40.5	43.9	33.7	
	No								26	28	25.5	39.9	
	Definitely No								7.1	5.2	3.2	8.7	
	No Opinion/ don't know								3.1	2.8	2.9	2	
<b><u>Gaza Withdrawal victory for armed resistance?</u></b>													
<b>#8</b>	Definitely Victory								40.4	45.9			
	I think that this is a Victory								34.9	36.6			
	I think that this is not a victory								17.2	13.9			
	Definitely not a victory								5.8	3.2			
	No Opinion/ Don't know								1.7	0.5			

Table 2:

Date	total	Israel Civilians	Soldiers provoked	Soldiers Unprovoked	Total Soldiers	WB/ Gaza Civilians	Kassam
Total 2003	64	20	6	20	26	13	5
Percent year	140.63%	31.25%	9.38%	31.25%	40.63%	20.31%	7.81%
Total 2004	34	9	1	16	17	6	2
Percent year	150.00%	26.47%	2.94%	47.06%	50.00%	17.65%	5.88%
Total 2005	21	5	2	7	9	6	1
Percent year	142.86%	23.81%	9.52%	33.33%	42.86%	28.57%	4.76%
Total 2006	12	2	2	1	3	5	2
Percent year	125.00%	16.67%	16.67%	8.33%	25.00%	41.67%	16.67%
Total of all attacks	131	37	11	44	55	30	10

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